

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method for auctioning over a communications network, the method  
5 comprising the steps of:

receiving from a buyer over the communications network a maximum  
price that the buyer is willing to pay for at least one of a good and a service;

receiving from a plurality of potential sellers over the communications  
network progressively lower competing bids for the at least one of the good or the  
10 service, the competing bids corresponding to compensation amounts that potential sellers  
are willing to accept for providing the at least one of the good and the service; and  
generating at least one signal corresponding to an identity of a winning  
seller.

15 2. The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:  
notifying eligible workers over the communications network of an auction  
of a call schedule assignment;

wherein the step of receiving the bids includes

receiving over the communications network at least one bid for the  
20 call schedule assignment from at least one of the workers;

notifying the workers over the communications network that a  
lower bid is needed if each of the bids is higher than a maximum amount;  
and

receiving over the communications network competing bids for the call schedule assignment from a plurality of eligible workers until a time period has expired.

5                   3. The method of claim 2, further comprising the step of hiding the competing bids from the workers.

10                   4. The method of claim 2, further comprising the step of automatically lowering at least one of the competing bids.

15                   5. The method of claim 4, further comprising the step of hiding the competing bids from the workers.

20                   6. An apparatus for auctioning over a communications network, the apparatus comprising:

a computing device configured to be coupled to the communications network, the computing device being further configured to

receive over the communications network a maximum price that a buyer is willing to pay for at least one of a good or a service,

20                   receive over the communications network a plurality of progressively lower competing bids for the at least one of the good or the service, the competing bids corresponding to compensation amounts that potential sellers are willing to accept for providing the at least one of the good or the service, and

generate at least one signal corresponding to an identity of a  
winning seller.

7. The apparatus of claim 6, wherein the computing device is further

5 configured to

obtain a list of eligible workers, and

transmit over the communications network a notification of an

10 auction of a call schedule assignment, and

wherein being configured to receive the bids includes being

10 configured to

receive over the communications network at least one bid

for the call schedule assignment,

transmit over the communications network a notification

that a lower bid is needed if each of the bids is higher than a

15 maximum amount; and

receive over the communications network competing bids

for the assignment from at least some of the eligible workers on the

until a time period has expired.

20 8. The apparatus of claim 7, wherein the computing device is further  
configured to hide the competing bids from the workers.

9. The apparatus of claim 7, wherein the computing device is further  
configured to automatically lower at least one of the competing bids.

10. The apparatus of claim 9, wherein the computing device is further configured to hide the competing bids from the workers.

11. An apparatus for auctioning an assignment on a call work schedule,  
5 the schedule being suited for communication over a communications network, the apparatus comprising:

a computing device configured to be coupled to the communications network, the computing device being further configured to

10 transmit a request over the communications network to auction the assignment,

obtain a list of workers who can take the assignment without violating at least one of demographic information and rules,

transmit at least one bid for the assignment over the communications network, and

15 generate an announcement corresponding to an identity of a winning bidder.

12. An article of manufacture for auctioning over a communications network, the article of manufacture comprising:

20 a computer-readable signal-bearing medium, the computer-readable signal-bearing medium having information signals therein, the information signals corresponding to a plurality of instructions which, when executed by the apparatus, cause the apparatus to

receive over the communications network a maximum price that a  
buyer is willing to pay for at least one of a good or a service,

receive over the communications network a plurality of  
progressively lower competing bids for the at least one of the good or the  
service, the competing bids corresponding to compensation amounts that  
potential sellers are willing to accept for providing the at least one of the  
good or the service, and

generate at least one signal corresponding to an identity of a  
winning seller.

13. The article of claim 12, wherein the plurality of instructions, when  
executed by the apparatus, further cause the apparatus to

obtain a list of eligible workers,

transmit over the communications network a notification of an  
auction of a call schedule assignment,

receive over the communications network at least one bid for the  
assignment,

transmit over the communications network a notification that a  
lower bid is needed if each of the bids is higher than a maximum amount,  
and

receive over the communications network competing bids for the  
assignment from at least some of the workers until a time period has  
expired.

14. The article of claim 13, wherein the plurality of instructions, when executed by the apparatus, further cause the apparatus to hide the competing bids from the workers.

5                   15. The article of claim 13, wherein the computer-readable signal-bearing medium includes a recordable data storage medium.

10                   16. The article of claim 15, wherein the plurality of instructions, when executed by the apparatus, further cause the apparatus to hide the competing bids from the plurality of workers.

15                   17. The article of claim 13, wherein the computer-readable signal-bearing medium is selected from a group consisting of magnetic, optical, biological, and atomic data storage media.

18. The article of claim 17, wherein the plurality of instructions, when executed by the apparatus, further cause the apparatus to hide the competing bids from the workers.

20                   19. The article of claim 13, wherein the computer-readable signal-bearing medium includes a modulated carrier signal.

20. The article of claim 19, wherein the plurality of instructions, when executed by the apparatus, further cause the apparatus to hide the competing bids from the workers.

5                   21. The article of claim 13, wherein the plurality of instructions, when executed by the apparatus, further cause the apparatus to automatically lower at least one of the competing bids.

10                   22. The article of claim 21, wherein the plurality of instructions, when executed by the apparatus, further cause the apparatus to hide the competing bids from the workers.